

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5353

INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 2568

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CZ, BU/ XH

SUBJ: TRAVELERS TO AND FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. LEADERS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TRAVELLING ABROAD AND RECEIVING FOREIGN VISITORS AT A PACE NOT SEEN HERE SINCE 1968 LAST WEEK GUSTAV HUSAK MADE HIS FIRST VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA AS PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL JUST AFTER RECEIVING BRIEF VISIT FROM BULGARIAN PARTY LEADER ZHIVKOV. SOVIET DEPUTY PREMIER LESECHKO, PRESIDENT GIRI OF INDIA, PREMIER PHAM VAN DONG OF NORTH VIETNAM, AND PRESIDENT JABLONSKI OF POLAND HAVE ALL COME TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITHIN PAST FOUR WEEKS. IN ADDITION TO HUSAK'S
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TRAVELS, PREMIER STROUGAL VISITED FINLAND EARLY IN

OCTOBER; FEDERAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN INDRA HEADED PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO ROMANIA LAST WEEK; PARTY SECRETARY BILAK ACCOMPANIED HUSAK TO YUGOSLAVIA; AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOHUSLAV CHNOUPEK JUST RETURNED FROM UNGA IN NEW YORK AND SIDE TRIP TO MEXICO.

2. THIS HIGHLY VISIBLE, HIGH-LEVEL BUT SOMETIMES LOW-YIELD ACTIVITY REFLECTS AT LEAST IN PART CZECHOSLOVAK ATTEMPT DURING PAST YEAR TO BREAK OUT OF DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION RESULTING FROM 1968 WARSAW PACT INVASION. BETWEEN 1968 AND 1972 CZECHS, UNDER HEAVY SOVIET PRESSURE, WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH SORTING OUT THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVING "NORMALIZATION". THEY APPEAR NOW TO HAVE DECIDED TO ATTEMPT TO DISPEL BAD LIGHT WHICH EVENTS OF 1968 CAST, FIRST UPON THEIR REPUTATION FOR "RELIABILITY" WITH THEIR ALLIES AND AFTER INVATION, ON LEGITIMACY OF THEIR REGIME IN EYES OF REST OF WORLD. THEY CLEARLY AND UNDERSTANDABLY WISH TO BE CONSIDERED AS COUNTRY WITH AN ACTIVE AND DISTINCT FOREIGN POLICY, ALTHOUGH ONE IN FULL HARMONY WITH SOVIET POLICY, AND A COUNTRY WITH INTERNATIONAL RESPECTABILITY. CHNOUPEK'S VISIT TO BONN THIS PAST SUMMER WAS PERHAPS MAJOR STEP TOWARD REALIZATION OF THIS GOAL, DESPITE SUBSEQUENT FAILURE TO ACHIEVE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. BRANDT VISIT, WHICH CZECHS HOPE CAN BE RE-SCHEDULED IN REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE DESPITE CONTINUED IMPASSE RE BERLIN ISSUE, WILL BE ANOTHER SUCH STEP. IN MEANTIME CZECHS ARE GETTING BACK INTO INTERNATIONAL SCENE WITH CONTINUING SERIES OF LESS SIGNIFICANT BUT STILL MEANINGFUL SOCIAL CALLS. VISIT BY HUSAK TO INDIA IN DECEMBER AND CHNOUPEK TO JAPAN IN NOVEMBER HAVE ALREADY BEEN SCHEDULED, AND, AS REPORTED SEPTTEL, CHNOUPEK IS ALSO PLANNING VISIT TO TURKEY.

3. NOT ALL RECENT VISITS TO PRAGUE HAVE BEEN AIMED SIMPLY AT BETTERING CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S DIPLOMATIC GOOD NAME. VISIT BY LESECHKO, IN PARTICULAR, PRESUMABLY INVOLVED SOME HARD BARGAINING SINCE FUTURE OF BILATERAL ECONOMIC TIES WAS DISCUSSED AND WE KNOW FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS ON BOTH SIDES IN THIS FIELD. AS FOR ZHIVKOV VISIT, PRIMARY AIM OF WHICH WAS OSTENSIBLY TO OPEN
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BULGARIAN EXHIBITION, WE HAVE LITTLE BASIS FOR CONFIRMING RFE SPECULATION CONTAINED IN MUNICH 1847(NOTAL). PRIVATE DISCUSSION OF MACEDONIAN QUESTION WOULD HAVE SEEMED NATURAL ON EVE OF HUSAK'S VISIT TO BELGRADE, BUT IF IN FACT ZHIVKOV CAME TO PRAGUE TO PERSUADE HUSAK TO TAKE BULGARIAN SIDE POSITION ON MACEDONIAN QUESTION, HE SEEMS TO HAVE FAILED. HUSAK'S TOUR OF MACEDONIAN REPUBLIC WAS WIDELY AND FAVORABLY PUBLICIZED HERE. NONE OF HUSAK'S

OTHER STOPS OUTSIDE BELGRADE RECEIVED SO MUCH PLAY IN
PRESS AND ON TELEVISION.
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